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SUBJECT: Somalia - First Steps to Implementing the Djibouti Agreement

REF: Nairobi 1959 and previous

¶1. (SBU) Summary. On August 16, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Somalia Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah (SRSG) opened the first meeting of the High Level Committee and the Joint Security Committee to implement the Djibouti Agreement. At least one of the objectives of the meeting is to resuscitate the forward momentum halted by internal crises threatening to destabilize both the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS). The environment is positive, the delegates focused, and the mood is collaborative, and all have stated their commitment to transform this into concrete action. Although the TFG delayed work as it balanced competing interests of President Yusuf and Prime Minister Hussein in the composition of its delegation, it has now agreed on its members. Prior to the scheduled conclusion of these discussions on August 19, each committee is to define its terms of reference and plan of work. Key figures from both parties continue to arrive in Djibouti, yet the committees are making progress. End Summary.

Launching the Djibouti Agreement

¶2. (SBU) On August 16, in the presence of the Djibouti-based diplomatic corps and international representatives from Nairobi, New York, and Cairo, the SRSG opened the third round of talks between the TFG and the ARS. The objective of this meeting is to begin concrete steps to implement the June 9 Djibouti agreement. While the last round of discussions in Djibouti was slated for 10 days, this round was initially designed to last only for two. The dates were chosen just two weeks prior, as internal crises with the two parties were threatening to undermine the Djibouti agreement. With the delay in the formal signing, spoilers on both sides had begun to exploit the time lag by fueling existing internal divisions. The SRSG called the meeting to get the agreement back on track.

¶3. (SBU) A key outcome of this meeting is standing up the High Level Committee and the Joint Security Committee, as outlined in the agreement. Although both the TFG and the ARS submitted their delegate lists weeks ago, this was the first time the committees met. While most of the ARS delegates were already in Djibouti where the majority of the Central Committee is now based, the bulk of the TFG delegated arrived from Mogadishu and Baidoa August 15 in a chartered aircraft. On August 16, there was an official opening ceremony. The TFG Head of Delegation is Ahmed Abdisalam Aden, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information, Youth Affairs, and Sports. The ARS was represented by Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, Chairman of the Central Committee and Abdurahman Abdishakur Warsame, Deputy Chairman of the Central Committee. Prime Minister Hassan Hussein is expected to arrive in Djibouti from Addis Ababa on August 17, and ARS Chairman Sharif Sheikh Ahmed is scheduled to arrive on August 18 from Khartoum.

¶4. (SBU) The August 16 opening ceremony set an extremely positive

tone for the discussions. After a reading from the Koran, a traditional Somali poet sung, "Where there is no peace, there is no life," and encouraged all present to think about peace, and only peace." Both Abdisalam and Warsame offered spirited opening remarks, emphasizing the importance of reconciliation, collaboration and a promise to make the necessary effort toward peace. One of the most important interventions was made by Hamoud Abdi Soultan, Djibouti's Minister of Muslim Affairs, who encouraged all actors to take personal responsibility to create the conditions for the international community to help by developing multiple solutions to address Somalia's problems. In Somali, Soultan exhorted all of the delegates to lay aside personal, political, and clan interests for the good of the nation and its people. He emphasized the importance of seizing this opportunity to establish a clear vision for the Somali people, before it is too late.

15. (SBU) In addition to the TFG and ARS representatives present, there was a significant contingent of Djibouti-based business leaders. This group included one of the Adani brothers, one of the economic powerhouses in Mogadishu. Long-time Somalia experts who were present at the ceremony told us, "This time, it feels different from prior peace conferences." Delegates from both the TFG and the ARS freely embraced and talked -- a stark difference from the last round of discussions where both sides refused to formally meet face-to-face. The environment was reminiscent of the jubilant atmosphere that marked the June 9 ceremony where the Djibouti Agreement was initialed. Another Somalia expert told us that while these conditions are necessary for a breakthrough, they are not sufficient. It will be necessary for all the stakeholders to translate this goodwill into concrete actions, bringing along key Somalis who are not present, he said.

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16. (SBU) Both committees briefly met the afternoon of August 16 and the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) distributed draft terms of reference. The delegations discussed procedures to reach to finalize the terms and to agree upon a plan of work, including the time and place for their next meeting. They agreed to work independently and re-convene on August 17.

High Level Committee

17. (SBU) SRSG Ould-Abdallah is the interim chair of the High Level Committee (HLC), as both sides try to reach agreement on who will facilitate their work in the future. While the initial meeting of the HLC was positive, the delegates were not prepared to address any substantive issues. On August 16, the TFG had not reached a final agreement on the composition of its members. On July 18, the Prime Minister submitted a list of nine persons agreed to by President Yusuf. During the conflict between Yusuf and Hussein, the PM submitted a list of an additional six representatives to the SRSG. Yusuf was reportedly angry and refused to accept any of these new members while the PM also dug in his heels. Of the original list of nine, seven representatives are present in Djibouti, as are four of the six additional persons proposed by the PM. President Yusuf said that he will not support the process if the original list is not accepted. The TFG reportedly met informally through the night of August 16. The High Level Committee was to convene at 0900 on August 17, but the TFG was still working out its internal issues.

18. (SBU) At approximately 1200 on August 17, the TFG declared it had reached agreement -- its delegation would be composed only of the nine initial persons on its first list. The others would participate in the meetings, but would not be eligible to take any official votes or decisions. The High Level Committee reconvened and Abdisalam and Warsame both made statements about their readiness for work. The SRSG welcomed Abdirizak Ashkir Abdi, TFG Minister of Reconciliation, Regional Development and Federal Affairs and Nur Iidow Beyle, Minister of Public Works and Reconstruction, who were not present at the first meeting of the committee. (Note: Yusuf reportedly encouraged both of these ministers to resign, but they remain in office. End note.) A civil society representative discussed the importance of focusing on humanitarian access and

concrete solutions. After approximately 20 minutes, the SRSG adjourned the meeting. The High Level committee was expected to reconvene later in the day. The TFG delegates said they have worked out their internal difficulties and were ready to move forward. ARS representatives separately told us that they helped mediate the conflict within the TFG.

Joint Security Committee

¶9. (SBU) The Joint Security Committee (JSC) is co-chaired by Colonel William Bryan Norman (United States), Director of Military Planning in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Major General Juvenal Niyoyunguruza (Burundi), AMISOM Deputy Force Commander. While there was a significant battle over the TFG membership of the HLC, there was no such conflict for the JSC. TFG delegates to the JSC include General Abdi Awale Qeybdid, Commissioner of Police, and General Mohamed Warsame Farah "Darwish", Director of the National Security Service, both of whom are actively participating in the committee work. After their inaugural meeting on August 16, the TFG and ARS representatives met separately to prepare amendments to their terms of reference, work plans, and platforms. On August 17, they began meeting early in the morning to discuss their ideas and establish sub-committees. At 1230, the delegates asked the co-chairs for the opportunity to draft one common document and final terms of reference, which they would present to the chairs and international representatives at 1100 on August 18.

¶10. (SBU) While the international representatives observed the work of the JSC, the participants plainly stated that they preferred to work independently. One of the ARS leaders referred to his fellow JSC members as "his brothers" with years of experience on the ground, who know the country and its dynamics better than anyone from the outside. Darwish said they appreciated the international facilitation, but the JSC can "harmonize their views" on its own and later present them to the larger group. With their pragmatic approach, the JSC appears to be making progress. The ARS and TFG delegates told us that they appreciate the opportunity to work together and requested that the international community be ready to provide technical support for the common security arrangements they agree to implement. The JSC has taken its first steps to developing a shared perspective on improving security. The SRSG stated that to his surprise, the JSC is moving forward faster than he had

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imagined, and is "one step ahead of us." He expressed hope that the HLC would start making similar progress on political issues.

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